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Message Text

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PAGE 01 LA PAZ 04988 021911Z

72
ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-11 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 L-03 NSC-07

PA-04 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 /115 W
---------- 082333
R 021610Z AUG 74
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3817

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 4988

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, BL
SUBJ: POSSIBLE REOPENING OF CENTRAL OBRERA BOLIVIANA (COB)

1. THE MINISTER OF LABOR HAS STARTED DISCUSSIONS WITH BOLIVIA'S MAJOR CONFEDERATIONS AND FEDERATIONS ON THE POSSIBILITY OF RE-OPENING THE CENTRAL OBRERA BOLIVIANA (COB). THIS REPRESENTS A MAJOR CHANGE IN THE GOVERNMENT'S LABOR POLICY SINCE THE DISESTAB-LISHMENT OF THE COB HAD BEEN A KEY TACTIC IN THE BANZER REGIME'S STRATEGY OF KEEPING THE LABOR MOVEMENT DIVIDED.

2. THE MINISTER OF LABOR HAS INDICATED IN A NUMBER OF STATEMENTS ON THIS ISSUE THAT TO BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT THE COB WOULD HAVE TO BE REORGANIZED AS AN APOLITICAL ORGANIZATION STRICTLY DEVOTED TO TRADE UNION MATTERS. THERE IS SOME SUPPORT FOR THIS VIEW AMONG CERTAIN LABOR ORGANIZATIONS WHO BELIEVE THAT THE COB STATUTES GIVE DISAPROPORTIONATE VOTING STRENGTH TO THE MINERS AND FACTORY WORKERS. MODERATE TRADE UNIONISTS WOULD ALSO LIKE TO SEE ORGANIZATIONS NOT STRICTLY TRADE UNION SUCH AS STUDENT GROUPS AND "FREE PROFESSIONALS" SEPARATED FROM THE COB. THE MINERS FEDERATION IS, OF COURSE, OPPOSED TO ANY CHANGES IN THE COB'S STATUTES.

3. COMMENT: THE REOPENING OF THE COB WOULD STRENGTHEN THE BARGAINING POWER OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT MANYFOLD AND INEVITABLY ENABLE THE MOVEMENT TO PLAY A MORE EFFECTIVE ROLE AS CRITIC
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OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICIES OF THE GOVERNMENT. IT

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SEEMS PROBABLE THAT VARIOUS UNIONS MIGHT ACCEPT SOME CHANGES
IN THE COB'S TRADITIONAL STRUCTURE IF IT MEANT THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN HAVING A CENTRAL OR NOT.
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